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Community Leaders to Explore Dealing with the Past issues

An European Union PEACE III Programme funded initiative to help community leaders from across Northern Ireland explore the legacy of the conflict here and investigate how they can contribute to the ongoing debate on dealing with the past has been launched (May 27 2009).

The Journeys Out project is spearheaded by INCORE, the International Conflict Research Institute at the University of Ulster's Magee campus, in association with Intercomm Ireland, Belfast, the Peace and Reconciliation Group, Derry/Londonderry and the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation.

Over the next two years, Journeys Out will work with 44 emerging community leaders from a variety of backgrounds and experiences who are working in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Strabane and Ballymena.

Gráinne Kelly Policy/Practice Coordinator with Incore says the project aims to engage a new generation of community leaders in the debate about dealing with the past.

"These community leaders are working on a daily basis with individuals and groups in their own communities who have been affected by the conflict such as victims, survivors, church groups, sports clubs, former combatants and young offenders.

"This will help us explore some of the issues within their local communities and enable them to learn more from international experiences. It will also help address the gap between formal mechanisms for dealing with the past such as the Eames Bradley recommendations and the reality of day-to-day living with the legacy of conflict at a local level."

Over the next 12 months, the first group of community leaders selected to participate in the Journeys Out will engage in a programme of training, community research, workshops and policy seminars, culminating in an international study visit to South Africa to explore the successes and failures of the mechanisms used for dealing with the past in the post-apartheid context.

Journeys Out is follow on from the very successful pilot project in 2007 in which 17 community leaders from Derry/Londonderry and Belfast were empowered to explore the sensitivities and challenges of addressing the impact of the conflict. The EU PEACE III Programme awarded nearly €500,000 to support this next phase of the programme which is part financed by the European Union's European Regional Development Fund through the

EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation managed by the Special EU Programmes Body.

Speaking at the launch of Journeys Out, INCORE Director Dr Brandon Hamber said: “I am delighted that we have been given the opportunity to explore the important issue of dealing with the past with those working at a community level that have to address the legacy of the conflict on an daily basis. At the end of the project we hope to have empowered and equipped a new generation of emerging community leaders with the skills and competencies to explore the opportunities and challenges which come with the transition from conflict to peace.

“This is a particularly timely and relevant project for INCORE to be leading at this time. The issue of dealing with the past is squarely on the agenda in Northern Ireland and it is vital that those debates are taking place at a community level, as well as a political level.”

Notes to Editors

Journeys Out Project will be launched at the O'Neill Arms Hotel, Toomebridge on Wednesday May 27th 2009 at 11.30am.

The EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland, 2007 2013 (the PEACE III Programme) is a distinctive European Union Structural Funds Programme aimed at reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society and promoting reconciliation. It will assist Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland and specifically focus on reconciling communities and contributing towards a shared society.

It will deliver these priorities through measures which will:

- Build positive relations at the local level
- Acknowledge the past
- Create shared public spaces
- Develop key institutional capacity for a shared society

The PEACE III Programme is worth 333 million made up of 225 million in additional funding from the European Union along with national contributions of 108 million.

The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) is the Managing Authority for the PEACE III Programme. Part of the programme will be implemented by the Consortium of Border Action and the Community Relations Council (CRC). The consortium looks after the implementation of projects relating to acknowledging and dealing with the past.

Journeys Out is delivered as a partnership between INCORE at the University of Ulster, Intercomm, Belfast, Peace and Reconciliation Group, Derry/Londonderry and Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Co. Wicklow.

INCORE (International Conflict Research Institute) is a joint project of the United Nations University and the University of Ulster. Combining research, education and comparative analysis, INCORE addresses the causes and consequences of conflict in Northern Ireland and internationally and promotes conflict resolution management and peacebuilding strategies.

Intercomm is an inter-community organisation based in North Belfast specialising in economic regeneration, social reconstruction and local and international peace-building practices. It was founded in 1995 as a direct response to grassroots community concerns about inter-community conflict and social deprivation in the area.

The Peace and Reconciliation Group, Derry/Londonderry are a registered charity with over thirty years of experience of working in the community. PRG runs a mediation service as well

as managing a wide reaching project programme, with projects aimed at young people, children, families, ex combatants and also run projects which are tailored to need specific needs or address situations.

The Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, based in Co. Wicklow, is devoted to peacebuilding and reconciliation in Ireland, North and South, Britain and beyond. Founded in 1974, Glencree work builds peace and fosters reconciliation by facilitating dialogues, creating peace education resources, and much more.

